



**U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
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**DUCK DEPRESSION CHECKED,  
REPORTS BIOLOGICAL SURVEY**

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The waterfowl depression is on the mend, says the Biological Survey of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. An annual mid-winter inventory just completed shows that for the second consecutive year more wild ducks and geese wintered in the United States than in the previous year. Up till last year the depletion of the waterfowl supply had continued for many years.

Observers of the Biological Survey in making this year's inventory reported they saw nearly 9,500,000 ducks and geese. This number, according to the Survey, probably is not much more than a fourth of the continent's waterfowl.

Mallard and pintail increases were largest. Lesser scaups, black ducks, baldpates, snow geese, and Canada geese also gained. Canvasbacks and redheads, fully protected for the first time last year, also showed an increase. The 1935-36 inventory showed these species had decreased further, in contrast to most waterfowl.

"The increase this winter is not as spectacular as last year's, but it shows that the Department's program is producing results," says the Survey. "This upward trend can be attributed to several factors. More birds returned to breeding grounds a year ago as a result of hunting restrictions. There was a good increase of young ducks and geese. The Federal refuge system is showing results. Last fall's hunting regulations also were strict. Sportsmen are giving increasing support to the waterfowl restoration program.

"These gratifying gains, however, should not lead sportsmen to believe that waterfowl have fully recovered. The last two mid-winter inventories show only that the birds are beginning to respond to better treatment. Further improvement to bring the birds up to normal numbers depends upon continued cooperation in the restoration program."

For the inventory just completed the entire field personnel of eight regional directors of the Bureau's Division of Game Management surveyed definite waterfowl areas by land, water, and air. This group was augmented by state game wardens, state police officers, personnel from the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service, observers from state colleges, volunteer observers of the Survey, and members of various wildlife and sportsmen's organizations.

The Biological Survey also used its "navy" of patrol boats, patrol craft of state game commissions, boats of the Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection, patrol vessels of the Coast Guard, and many privately-owned power boats. Aircraft was supplied by the Army Air Corps, the Naval Air Service, the Coast Guard, a tire manufacturing company, and private citizens. One regional director used 18 aircraft, including naval bombing planes, blimps, and an autogiro. One observer flew 1,700 miles in a navy plane along the Gulf Coast from Florida west to the mouth of the Sabine River in Louisiana. Another continued westward in a Coast Guard plane to the mouth of the Rio Grande. Others covered coastal and interior waters by boat. Smaller lakes, ponds, and marshes were reached by automobile. Several agents of the Survey traveled on snowshoes. All reports were analyzed by the Bureau's biologists in Washington.

To keep in constant touch with the waterfowl situation the Survey also sends biologists and game-management agents to the principal breeding grounds. This territory lies for the most part in the strip of prairie country extending from Great Bear Lake and the Mackenzie Valley in the north to the Dakotas, Minnesota and

Nebraska. This area produces two-thirds to three-fourths of the mallards, pintails, redheads, canvasbacks, scaups, and other game species. The black duck and Canada goose are the principal game species breeding in the eastern part of the mainland. Greenland and eastern Arctic islands produce Atlantic brant, snow geese, and blue geese.

Last summer Survey parties found large areas of excellent breeding grounds in the Canadian prairie country uninhabited by waterfowl. On other areas they found more birds than in the previous summer. Their reports were substantiated last fall. Southward migrations showed a general increase. Only the Central Flyway made a poor showing. Drought had apparently driven birds to the adjoining Mississippi and Pacific Flyways.

Bureau investigators followed the birds to their wintering grounds, even in Mexico. Again they confirmed reports that the decrease had been checked. Evidence of increase was noted.

With the mid-winter inventory completed, the Survey is again making plans for summer investigations on breeding grounds.

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